

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

Chairman

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NCC EXPRESSES SORROW ON DEATH OF NEHRU

The National Christian Council of Japan expressed sorrow over the loss of the late Prime Minister Nehru of India. A telegram of condolence was sent to the National Christian Council of India as follows:

"During this crisis in your great country the Christians of Japan express real sorrow over the loss of Prime Minister Nehru. Our prayers are that India will continue united in whatever comes." The telegram was signed by Dr. Chitose Kishi, Chairman.

INDUSTRIAL EVANGELISM CONSULTATION IN HIROSHIMA

On May 15 a consultation on industrial evangelism was held in Hiroshima, Japan. This was the first experiment for a meeting of this kind on a local, regional level. There were 18 participants from seven denominations and church-related groups: Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church; The United Church of Christ in Japan; The Japan Baptist Convention; The Japan Anglican Episcopal Church; The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.; The Christian and Missionary Alliance and the Y.M.C.A.

The Reverend Henry D. Jones, an American missionary and an expert on industrial evangelism, gave a lecture on the theme, "Go Out United Through Forming The Team."

Though there were no definite findings, they discussed the fundamental attitude toward industrial evangelism, the relationship between mission and service, and the importance of everyday activities as over against one single specified action.

Concerning denominational problems in the seeking of mutual assistance and co-operation, the delegates came to the conclusion that the effort to find common ground is essential. Instead of finding differences among themselves, wherever they can, they will cooperate for the united witness to Christ in the field of industrial mission. The necessity to bring together all Christians in each working place is realized. Liaison committee members were elected to promote industrial mission in the Hiroshima area.

KYUSHU THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL ENTERS INTER-SEMINARY ASSOCIATION

The admission of Seinan Gakuin Theological School, Kyushu, Japan, to the Inter-Seminary Association was unanimously confirmed at the annual inter-seminary conference held at the School of Theology, Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan, on May 2, 1964. Seinan Gakuin has a theological school founded by Southern Baptists. Over 260 seminarians participated in the national conference.

The Association was founded 14 years ago and holds an annual conference in which seven Protestant theological seminaries participate, including Tokyo Union Theological Seminary; Aoyama Gakuin Theological Seminary; School of Theology, Doshisha University; Kwansei Gakuin; Japan Biblical Seminary; Rural Leadership Training Institute and School of Theology; and Kwanto Gakuin University. Altogether it includes about 500 seminary students who belong to eight major Protestant seminaries in Japan.

BUDDHISTS SEE VALUE OF SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Buddhists are coming to believe that the equivalent of the Christian Sunday school is also a necessity for them. Therefore the National Council of Education for Young People issue a monthly magazine which they call Fountain of Teaching. The Buddhists do not hesitate to borrow from the Christians when they feel their methods are workable. In the May 1964 issue of the magazine there appears an article about the Tokyo Union Church which features the work of Mrs. Henry D. Jones. Here is a free translation of the article:

Mrs. Henry D. Jones is Superintendent of the Tokyo Union Church Sunday School which has slightly more than 300 enrolled and a staff of 50 teachers, along with personnel used in the teacher training program. This involves benevolence projects, special programs and teacher recruitment. In the Sunday school there are six departments from the nursery level (three-year-olds) through high school with coordinators for each department. There are two sessions, one at 9 a.m. and another at 11 a.m.

Teachers' meetings are held each month. Departments meet at other times for lesson planning. Twice a year, at the beginning of the semester, an intensive one-day teacher training program is held.

The curriculum in use is that developed by the United Church Ministries. It is Bible-centered and related to the everyday world of the child. It seeks to help him grow in his relationships with God, to develop trustful and responsible relationships with others and to become a whole person. Christian education cannot be carried out by the Sunday school alone in one hour on Sunday morning, but is rather a shared task for both the church and the home. The family is the nurturing ground for the child as here are developed the basic concepts of trust, love, forgiveness through the life experiences of each day. Here the members of the family express their faith and understanding of their relationship to God.

SHAKESPEARE AND THE CHRISTIAN WORLD

The entire world has been celebrating the 400th anniversary of the birth of its greatest poet, William Shakespeare, born on or near April 23, 1564, in Stratford-on-Avon, England. In Tokyo, Japan, the event was memorialized April 26 at St. Alban's, English-language, Anglican Church, in a sermon preached by a layman, Mr. E.W.F. Tomlin, Cultural Attache of the British Embassy and Representative of the British Council. He chose as his subject, Shakespeare and the Christian World, presenting as his text the entire works of Shakespeare. The day was of particular significance as being that on which Shakespeare was himself baptized in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon.

Mr. Tomlin noted that all countries were in the process of celebrating this great event in history; his works have been received "with touching possessiveness" by the whole world. How does one account for this universality? Part of it was due, he claimed, to the fact that Shakespeare belonged to the Christian world.

Every writer had a particular and personal attitude toward life; this attitude was reflected, however indirectly, in his writings. To highlight this fact, he quoted T.S. Eliot's remark that "Shakespeare is difficult to fit into any theory, especially if it is about Shakespeare." It is not easy, Mr. Tomlin said, to define Shakespeare's place in the Christian world, but he hoped to throw some light upon it.

He continued by presenting several facts about his life which were usually either ignored or glossed over. As far as was known, Shakespeare was a member of the Anglican Church. Records show that he was baptized, married and buried according to the rites of this Church. Church going was compulsory at the time. His father, however, would seem to have been a secret member of the Roman Catholic Church. Although William Shakespeare, as well as his father, had many Roman Catholic friends, he himself would seem to have remained a loyal Anglican all his life.

The two editors of the First Folio, or Collected Edition of Shakespeare's Works, Hemminge and Condell, his lifelong friends, were church wardens of a London Church St. Mary Aldermanbury; thier graves were still to be seen in the cemetery. In view of the fact that the acting profession was so often denounced as profane and irreligious, this fact was of significance. In 1611, just five years before his death, Shakespeare retired to his home town of Stratford-on-Avon where he had worshiped regularly at Holy Trinity Church, in the chancel of which he lay buried with his family.

Shakespeare knew the Bible and the Prayer Book intimately; in his works there are allusions to at least 42 books of the Bible, including the Apocrypha. This is five times the amount found in the works of a contemporary, Christopher Marlowe. He was especially familiar with the Homilies, which were often substituted for sermons. In his will, he commended his soul into the hands of "God, my creator, and my body to the earth whereof it is made."

Mr. Tomlin reminded his congregation that faith must constantly be revived and lived up to. The fact that this faith may have lapsed occasionally was brought home to the reader in the study of Shakespeare's life during the ten-year period when he was 35 to 45 years of age. This was, significantly enough, the era of his great tragedies. It was during this time that the plays King Lear as well as Troilus and Cressida were written. In today's parlance, he may be said to have approached a mental breakdown, as the unfinished play Timon of Athens indicated. His contemporaries never reached this somber level. If violence itself were a sign of creativity, we should have a whole crop of Shakespeares at the present time; but such violence might reflect a form of spiritual anemia. Shakespeare's tragic view of the human soul was at root a spiritual one.

In Measure For Measure, Act II, Scene 2, he used a quotation to amplify the subject of his talk and his reference to Biblical thought:

".....but man, proud man,
Dressed in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,-
His glassy essence - like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep;....."

He compared the title of the play to the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Chapter VII, verses 1 and 2: "Judge not that ye be not judged: and with what

measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again"; in short, measure for measure. This play, written in 1603 or 4, was infused with Christian feeling.

Mr. Tomlin admitted that some of the plays might suggest an attitude of agnosticism, and, readily taking up the prerogatives of the preacher, he said that he had not chosen to stress these references. In all honesty, however, he was forced to agree to their existence. Perhaps the poet, like many other Christians, had dwelt for much of his time in what Leibnitz called the "ante-chamber of belief."

Many of his later plays, and especially Hamlet, of which he quoted the opening scene, showed a distinctly moral view of life. Even an agnostic like Dr. A.L. Rowse admitted as much. Original sin, repentance, and reconciliation were repeated and even obsessive themes in his later plays. At the close of The Tempest, Miranda speaks of redeemed mankind, when she utters the famous lines: "How beauteous mankind is, O brave new world that has such people in it!"

The Speaker was only too conscious of glaring omissions in presenting his theme, due to the limited time at his disposal. One lack was all reference to the development of Elizabethan drama and its close link with the miracle and morality plays of the Middle Ages. Another reference he might have made was to that mysterious poem, The Phoenix and the Turtle, published in 1601, which he believed to be a poem about Christian love.

Mr. Tomlin concluded by stating that the Christian teaching was the only kind ultimately to be found workable. This, though no reason in itself for believing, was the kind of recognition that led to belief, and must accompany it. When infidelity was sweeping the world, it was good to reflect that in the words of our greatest poet, the sense of the Christian Gospel was clearly discernible, and must become apparent to anyone who diligently and humbly pondered those profound writings.

CHRISTIAN YOUTH WEEK OBSERVED

Christian Youth Week was observed from May 24 to May 31 in Japan. On the last day at the Tokyo YWCA approximately a hundred young people participated in the Tokyo Youth Assembly. Dr. S. Nababan, EACC youth secretary, addressed the young people on the Asian Youth Assembly to be held the end of the year in The Philippines.

He stressed the responsibility of youth in Asia and emphasized the importance for joint action for mission. Christian youth should assemble voluntarily, he said, and should not be institutionalized. Christians are in the minority in Japan, he reminded the group. They should not be afraid of this; rather, they should fear the enemy within themselves. "Young people must bear witness to Christ in secular youth activities," he said.

Dr. Nababan has been visiting Japan, in the company of his wife, to attend the conference on University Man in Modern Asia, as well as to visit Japan's places of interest.

PRAYER MEETING AT DIET

The 70th prayer meeting was held on June 4 at the House of Representatives in the Diet Building in Tokyo. There were 19 who attended, among these was Senator Jotaro Kawakami, Chairman of the Socialist Party. Dr. Isamu Omura, Moderator of the United Church of Christ in Japan and Vice Chairman of the JNCC presented a message from the Book of Isaiah. Mr. Kawakami expressed a wish that the group increase in number.